

ARRANZ-BRAVO, GEOMETRISM AND ORGANICITY

ARRANZ-BRAVO BELONGS TO THAT GENERATION OF ARTISTS
WHO RETRIEVED THE HUMAN FIGURE AS A FORMAL PROPOSITION
AND AS A REFLECTION OF THE SOCIAL DIMENSION



PANTOCRÁTOR CREADOR, 1989

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CATALÒNIA



FATHER ESTIMAT AMIC, 1988

Eduard Arranz-Bravo belongs to that generation of artists who, at the very beginning of the sixties, reacted to the language of abstraction and informalism and shaped a form of expression that was basically figurative and that relied on drawing for its academic basis and retrieved the human figure as a formal proposition and a reflection of the social dimension. The exhibition organised by the Sala Gaspar in 1966, called "Noves Expressions" and featuring the work of, amongst others, Arranz-Bravo, Bartolozzi, Llimós and Gerard Sala, became an important point of reference as regards this return to pictorialism and this reassessment of materials and traditions. The formal structuring that constructs and destroys the real image acts as an instrument of expression, so that with an intense critical spirit, man, immersed in his surroundings, becomes the central theme in the work of this group.

While, in the seventies, Arranz-Bravo, in an explosive expansion, took pleasure from playing with formal elements, in the eighties he synthesised and simplified his compositions in an internal volte face, only to return, in his latest work, to the complex networks of lines and colours that dilute the image, at the same time as it is fragmented and torn apart and the pieces dislocated, though without leaving off the same process of interiorisation.

Throughout his career, the artist seems to have wanted to strike a balance between the two opposite poles that play such an important part in his make-up: the geometrical and the organic; contention and expansion. In this sense, if

the carcass is geometrical, the epidermis is organic; if the structure is built according to strict order and method, the muscles dismember form in a clear process of abstraction.

This disarticulation is emphasized by colours that are profound, penetrating, and at the same time warm and sensuous, and by a light that is weightless, hard and silent, which reveals a struggle between the I and the surroundings, a vital struggle to survive aggressions and constant destruction. A true non-conformist, Arranz-Bravo's work has acted as a genuine corrective for the spectator. A constant tension, a sensuous heart-beat arises in the subject matter of his work, which always reaches the limits of the human drama, on the border where destruction and tearing are the incentive for the struggle and the fight for life. If I speak of subject matter, it's because in this case it's very important in that it maintains a direct reference to reality.

And so his reality turns towards painful observation of his surroundings, of disturbing situations that show themselves in the tortured portrait of human solitude, which he insists on in all his work and which is reflected in different ways at different times, although certain constant references are evident in the formal approach. An isolation that is even revealed in the loving embrace, in which the two bodies are mutually quartered and annihilated by physical contact. A process of decomposition and fragmentation of the image –which is increasingly stressed– absorbs the organic nature of the bodies in a magmatic space full of brushstrokes, colours and lines.

In this way, through rhythms and colours –always shaped by a constructive skeleton– he develops a process of abstraction, of dismembering, something like the formal shredding of a Bacon, within this visceral aesthetic expressed through a consciously intended magmatic flood. And yet the work of Arranz-Bravo is characterized by a rigorous balance between energy and measure, between spontaneity and contention.

Suddenly, the severity expands in organic forms that destroy the geometrical patterns and the backgrounds are violated with powerful, lively colours. The artist moves back and forth between structural limits and baroque excesses, but always playing on the crest of the limit and of the border where reason can lose its explanation.

His is an eminently sensuous art that takes pleasure in constant transgression, in the experience of sensations carried to voluptuousness, to the maximum intensity of the senses. This is where Arranz shows his talent, at the very moment when he resorts to the mind as a compensating element of so much intensity. The implacable logic that acts as an internal filter allows him to return from these excesses to achieve internal order.

The recent retrospective show at the Palau Robert in Barcelona, during the months of September and October, which brought together a broad selection of his work so far, from the beginnings to the present day, has allowed a global assessment of his creative process and development, thanks to the choice of representative, characteristic pieces from each of his periods. ■